



Stephanie Rawlings-Blake
Mayor

PLANNING COMMISSION

Wilbur E. "Bill" Cunningham, Chairman

STAFF REPORT



Thomas J. Stosur
Director

December 16, 2010

REQUESTS:

- Minor Amendment/ 25th Street Station PUD
- Final Design Approval/ 25th Street Station PUD

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Minor Amendment/ 25th Street Station PUD: Approval.
- Final Design Approval/ 25th Street Station PUD: Approval.

STAFF: Anthony Cataldo

OWNER: Multiple Owners

PETITIONER: WV Urban Developments LLC

SITE/ GENERAL AREA

General Area: The 25th Street Station proposed project area is located in North Baltimore within the Remington and Charles Village neighborhoods. The site is approximately 14.2 acres which includes rights-of-ways. The proposed built development area is 11.5 acres. The existing zoning is mixed with B-2-3, B-3-3, and M-2-2. The proposed development is not located within a designated Urban Renewal area, is not within a designated Historic District, is not located within the Chesapeake Bay Critical Area, and is not located within the 100-year FEMA flood plain. The project site is located within an Enterprise Zone Focus Area. The CSX tracks and railroad Right-of-way borders the west side of the site, Huntingdon and 25th Street border the north side, Maryland Avenue borders the east side and 24th Street and Sisson border south side of the site. Howard Street bisects the site creating two main development parcels.

Site Conditions: The site is a series of parcels in the Remington and Charles Village communities which is currently being used as a General Motors/ Honda Dealership, showroom, car lot, and associated structures as well as other light industrial uses. General Motors is closing this location and the Honda dealership is moving therefore leaving much of the site vacant.

HISTORY

- CCB #10-0488 establishing 25th St. Station as a Planned Unit Development was approved by the Planning Commission on August 5, 2010.

- Subdivision and Development Plan for 25th Street Station PUD -Lot 001 of Block 3625, Lots 011 and 013 of Block 3626A, and Lots 001, 002, 003, 004, and 005 of Block 3626C was approved by the Planning Commission on August, 5 2010.
- Street Closings for portions of Ware Street & Hampden Avenue were approved by the Planning Commission on August 5, 2010.

CONFORMITY TO PLANS

This project is consistent with the Baltimore City Comprehensive Master Plan: LIVE Section, Goal 1, Objective 1: Expand Housing Choice for all Residents, Goal 1, Objective 5: Increase the City's Population by 10,000 Households in 6 years, and PLAY Section, Goal 2, Objective 2: Promote Unique Retail Venues as Shopping and Tourist Destinations. The 25th Street Station development plan calls for approximately 70-80 residential units mixed with 337,568 square feet of mixed sized retail.

ANALYSIS

The 25th Street Station project is to be developed and owned by WV Urban Developments, LLC. It is a mixed use, residential and commercial development project with a variety of potential commercial uses. The development plan allocates space for modified large box retailers, mid-sized retailers, and smaller, neighborhood commercial spaces. Parking structures consolidate the required parking fields near and within buildings. The development is planned to be constructed in one phase.

There have been a few minor changes to building arrangements within one of the parcels along with minor changes to the parking numbers and square footages. Because the subject property is within a PUD, the Planning Commission must first approve the minor amendment and then the final design for the new buildings. The applicant has submitted to the Planning Commission for consideration the updated development plan, landscape plan, and building elevation drawings for the project. These plans make up the formal submittal to the Planning Commission for consideration of the Minor Amendment and Final Design Approval. The following is staff's review of the applicant's submittal.

Minor Amendment: The original development proposal for the southwest corner of N. Howard Street and 25th Street was viewed as one point of the development where the urban nature of the project was not reaching its full potential. The original proposal was to retain the existing building and add an addition to help bring the structure closer to the intersection. The desire from both the City and Community was to have a physical building occupy that corner and create an urban edge at that prominent intersection, rather than a signage tower feature that was proposed. Further investigation by the Development team of the existing building and the construction techniques required to salvage the structure, lead the team to re-evaluate their proposal and move forward with two new buildings on that site. One building will be constructed in the location of the existing structure and a new retail building will be constructed at the corner of 25th Street and N. Howard Street. With retail frontage on the both streets and the corner, this new proposal is more in line with an urban development and is seen as an improvement to the pedestrian experience along both of those streets. This change in the building organization does not increase the overall commercial square footage proposed in the PUD.

Site Plan: The site plan has been reviewed and approved by the Site Plan Review Committee. The master plan has been approved by UDARP and the development incorporates a variety of sustainable initiatives within the site plan. The 25th Street Station as a PUD originally called for retail floor area of approximately 337,568 square feet of commercial development and 70-80 apartment units. The advancement of the development now has approximately 338,099 square feet of retail, 2,000 square feet of office, 70-80 apartment units and approximately 1,027 total parking spaces.

The Development Plan is organized in a manner that retains the existing urban street fabric where possible and places major and secondary vehicular access points in locations that allow for visibility and safe traffic movements. The east parcel has 3 main entrances; one off Howard Street into the main parking field, one on 25th Street adjacent to the re-designed existing retail building, and one off of Maryland Avenue that travels through the proposed building at grade to lead you into the parking area.

The main entrance to the upper level of the west parcel is located at the intersection of 25th Street and Huntingdon Avenue. It begins at grade and slightly ramps up as it becomes structure for parking below to meet the corner of the proposed building. There is a secondary entrance point west on Huntingdon adjacent to a proposed new retail building. The main entrance to the lower level retail space on the west parcel is located off of 24th Street just east of the intersection of 24th Street and Hampden Avenue. There is a secondary access point near the intersection of Huntingdon Avenue and 24th Street.

The residential component of the plan is located along Maryland Avenue, above the proposed retail at street level. The retail envisioned for the ground level of this building as well as the remodeled Honda Showroom and the new building along Huntingdon Avenue, is of a smaller, more neighborhood commercial scale. Additional office space is also being proposed for the second level of the remodeled Honda Showroom building. This space will hold offices and a meeting room that can be utilized by the community groups and associations.

Building Elevations:

- *A1 – Upper level, large box retailer*

This building, currently proposed for a Walmart, will be a mix of precast concrete panels, concrete masonry units (CMU's), and brick. This façade of the building has a branding wall which is composed of a layering of architectural elements of colored CMU's and a custom rain screen which houses the retailer's signage. Glass storefront was introduced at the northeast corner of the building to let light into the adjoining staff and training rooms, as well as at the main entrance which is to the left of the branding wall. Two tones of brick help to visually break up the large massing of the structure. The east façade, also has brick pier and metal trellis structure which connects the pedestrian movement through the site to the front door of the building.

Brick wraps onto the north elevation of the building. The scale of this façade is also broken down with a projecting wall and a mix of brick and precast concrete panel. Additional storefront windows are also included in this elevation. The northwest and

southwest façades are simple in form using precast concrete panels to tie the upper retail building to the lower level retail building. The panels sit on a series of columns as the upper wall projects above the lower wall.

- *A2 – Lower level, large box retailer/garage*

The structure of this building is connected to A1 but its organization and function are slightly different. Only portions of this retail building's façades are visible from the public right of way. The western wall of A2, which is currently proposed to be a Lowe's, will be composed of two tones of CMU to help break the scale of the elevation down. The majority of the retail elevation is below and behind the columns of building A1 with only the southwestern portion wrapping around to the southern, 24th Street, façade.

Structured parking is the other component of building A2. Although physically connected to the retail buildings, architecturally it is designed to appear as a separate structure. The majority of this structure is along 24th Street with a slight bend into the development site to meet the retail buildings. The 24th Street façade will be brick and will have a system of piers and openings into the parking fields. There will be concrete base to the piers and a synthetic stucco or exterior insulation finishing system, EIFS cornice. There are small portions of storefront to enclose egress stairs from the garage near the east end of the building, adjacent to the vehicular entrance.

- *B1 – Maryland Avenue mixed use building*

This building has retail space on the first floor with three levels of apartments above. The retail level facing Maryland Avenue is composed of CMU block with arched masonry knock-out panels to allow for individual retailers to place additional service, entrance and storefronts on this elevation as desired. From there, brick extends up to the roof line at the corners and projections with a regular pattern of windows and pilasters to reduce the visual mass. Between the two projected façade elements, the top residential floor is slightly recessed and will be a painted fiber cement board siding. The cornice will be the EIFS material and the hipped roof will be clad in asphalt shingles.

Storefront wraps from the east façade around to north and west façades on the first floor and the brickwork continues. On the west façade which is interior to the site and front the parking field, the base level material changes to a system of brick piers with storefront and an EIFS fascia. The upper levels match in material and patterning to the east side of the building. This slight change in the base of the building works to connect the first floor retail of this building to the retail/garage of the adjacent B2 building.

- *B2 – 24th Street mid-size box retailers/parking structure*

Although physically connected to building B1, the change in uses within this building and desire to breakdown the large scale of the development have led to a change in the architectural vocabulary of building B2. In order to express its function within the form of the building, the brick façade will have pilasters to relate to the adjoining

mixed use building, but the brick will extend from the EIFS cornice to the sidewalk pavement. There are arched details on the east and south elevations within the brick to allow for large scale art to be incorporated within the façade. The upper levels will have simple punched openings into the structured parking fields. A large loading dock entrance is located on the south elevation facing 24th Street that will have a rolling screen/door to enclose the docks once trucks have entered. Because of the elevation change in grade across the site, there was an opportunity to incorporate a small retail component at the southwest corner of the building facing 24th Street and it is expressed with a simple storefront of glazing. The storefront is continued to the west elevation where the corners of the building are expressed architecturally with EIFS panels and complementing rooflines. The north façade mimics the ground floor of the adjacent B1 building with the use of brick pilasters, EIFS fascia, and storefront where small-mid size retailers are envisioned. The upper levels contain punched openings into the structured parking areas in this location. Near the bridge connection to B1, the brickwork is carried up to the cornice line to express a single mid-size retail user at the corner where first level storefront stretches from the parking lot under the building bridge connection to Maryland Avenue.

- *C1 – Retail building fronting Huntingdon Avenue*
This building is proposed with simple architecture using materials that blend seamlessly with the rest of the development. The storefront windows are contained within brick piers and topped with EIFS panel and cornice along Huntingdon Avenue. The building form rounds into the main entrance drive with a wall of glass at the first level and the same EIFS panel and cornice above. The south façade, which faces the large box retail loading area and adjacent parking, will be a mix of CMU's at the first floor level and EIFS panels above. The west elevation which faces the railroad tracks and is seen as you approach the site from the northwest down Huntingdon Avenue is composed as a continuation of the Huntingdon Avenue façade with brick piers, storefront at the corner, and EIFS panel and cornice above.
- *C2A – Inner retail building at Howard and 25th St.*
This building is a single tenant retail building proposed to be brick with and EIFS cornice. There is a simple architectural tower feature at the northeast corner of the building within will have storefront and a slightly higher roofline.
- *C2B – Retail building at the corner of Howard and 25th St.*
In order to anchor the corner of Howard Street and 25th Street, this building proposed a slightly taller tower element at the corner with brick piers and an EIFS cornice with storefront wrapping the east, north, and west elevations. The large amount of glazing will help activate this important intersection and add to a more pedestrian inclusive environment. The simple brick and CMU walls will tie this building to both C1 and C2A and create a cohesive development look along 25th Street as it bends into Huntingdon Avenue.
- *C3 – Existing showroom building to remain as retail/office space*

This portion of the existing structure, which is to remain, holds an important corner within the development. In order to express the history of the site as the Anderson Automotive facility and celebrate the architectural style in which the building was built, the proposal is to repaint the existing building with its existing color scheme. New storefront and some additional windows will be added for the new retail uses and a glass circulation tower is proposed for the south façade to increase efficiency within the building as well as create an additional entrance point from the adjacent surface parking lot into the building.

Forrest Conservation/ Landscape Plan: The development is required to provide 160 trees at 2.5 inch caliper for Forest Conservation and 79.7 inches of caliper to replace public trees that are going to be removed for construction (27 trees at 3 inch caliper area acceptable for the public tree replacement). The development plan proposes to exceed this requirement by providing 199 trees. This project will meet applicable storm water regulations and will use a variety of methods to address water quality and quantity. It also plans to meet or exceed dark sky compliance throughout the project site with pedestrian scaled street lighting and full cut-off parking field lighting.

The major public space is between the GM Showroom building and the retail/residential building along Maryland Avenue. The space is designed to interact with the future retail user of the adjacent building at the corner of 25th Street and Maryland Avenue, but also includes ample space for public gathering. Special paving, trees, and bio-retention planted areas offer aesthetic and storm water benefits to the project.

Flanking both sides of the entrance drive are large, raised tree planters. Because this area is part of the ramp up to structured parking below, trees need to be in planters to sustain life. On the east side of the entrance ramp, the structure will be designed to incorporate a planting area that will appear to be at grade, but will technically be structured. All of the bump-outs in this area are also planted. The planting scheme throughout the development is to use native Maryland plants and grasses, not to include turf grass. The trees in planters continue along the north and eastern facades of the upper level retail building as well as within the top level of the parking structure. Where feasible, additional planting beds are incorporated into the top level of the parking structure.

Street trees are included along the perimeter of the PUD area as well as infill and key locations across the streets within the communities. Each tree pit will be 6'x10' which allows ample room for the trees to mature into large shade trees. The parking field on the east parcel is designed to have stormwater bio-swaes between each aisle of parking reducing the heat island effect, allowing stormwater capture, and visually breaking up the asphalt parking lot. Plantings and a low wall along Howard Street will screen the parking area. The landscape treatment along the southern façade of the structured parking on the west parcel will also screen the garage and allow stormwater capture on site. The 20' area will be planted with a double allee of alternating trees with the pedestrian walkway located between them and away from the curb.

The south side of 24th street will also be treated with a planting strip with street trees and the trees and a wall extend up Sisson Street to add to the overall streetscaping and also to shield

the view down into the loading area. The wall has been designed with community input to incorporate as much of the stone from the existing chapel building as feasible. The entrance piece of the wall into the lower level of the large retailer space is proposed to be stone with mesh at the top in order to break up the massing of the wall. As the wall turns the corner and continues up Sisson street, the design incorporates the stone into Piers that are connected with brick that has an arch relief pattern. Plant material is proposed to add visual interest and vines will be permitted to climb on the wall.

Sustainability: The applicant will meet or exceed the Baltimore City Green Building standards for this project. The development team is pursuing the following strategies:

- Incorporating vegetated bump-outs to reduce impervious areas and provide traffic calming.
- Providing tree lined and pedestrian friendly streets with bike paths and convenient connections to mass transit to encourage alternative modes of transportation.
- Proposing native and water efficient landscaping.
- Utilizing recycled materials in infrastructure such as recycled concrete for road and sidewalk aggregate sub-base and incorporating recycled mineral admixtures in concrete storm drain piping.
- Incorporating Environmental Site Design elements to replicate natural hydrology such as disconnection of impervious runoff and micro-scale bio-retention facilities.
- Incorporating green roofs where feasible on structures.
- In addition to providing adequate facilities and maintenance for tenant and customer waste and recycling, the project will transform underutilized land adjacent to a railroad track, replace the existing fencing with more effective and attractive fencing and maintain it.
- The project proposes extensive public improvements adjacent to the project. The developer is expecting to use the project's vendors to clean the public right-of-way in these areas. The project proposes to close and improve the beds of Ware Street and Hampden Avenue within the projects boundary, improving and maintaining both.
- The project proposes to quickly redevelop a site which is a soon-to-be-shuttered automotive dealership in addition to the railroad property described above. It will avoid having a vacant lot and will provide a development with social and environmental benefits.
- Extensive pedestrian improvements (new sidewalks, streetscaping, street furniture, pedestrian-scaled lighting, etc.) are provided to encourage pedestrian activity and reduce dependence of nearby residents' use of the automobile and lower emissions.
- The project proposes extensive tree planting and a green roof of more than 1 acre in addition to energy efficient systems in the buildings which will help improve Baltimore's overall air quality.
- The project's proposed stormwater management systems will improve water quality that presently drains from the site, untreated, into storm drain facilities and discharges into the Inner Harbor.
- The site had been entered into the Maryland Voluntary Clean Up Program and will be remediated and capped as required.

- The project proposes 70-80 newly constructed residential dwellings, in addition to the redevelopment of two existing buildings on site. The existing buildings will be completely rehabilitated.
- The project will incorporate the use of high energy efficient systems as well as efficient building envelopes which will help reduce Baltimore's overall energy use.
- The project will incorporate the use of low flow water fixtures to reduce the use of potable water to reduce Baltimore's water use overall.
- In addition to recycling during the demolition phase, planned major tenants in the project have operational and supply-chain programs to reduce waste.
- Recycled and reclaimed materials will be incorporated into the design to conserve resources. Recycling opportunities and locations will be provided on site and in buildings to maximize reuse and recycling of materials.
- The project proposes to plant approximately 199 trees, a significant increase to the 38 trees presently on the site or along the adjoining public sidewalks. This effort supports the goal to double Baltimore's tree canopy by 2037.
- One of the project's planned, major tenants has developed a program to bring fresh, local produce into their stores to help establish Baltimore as a leader in sustainable, local food systems.
- The project proposes extensive plantings, including a 1 acre green roof, and will utilize native plants to help protect Baltimore's ecology and biodiversity.
- The developer has met with and requested the assistance of State legislators to improve transit services near the project to improve public transportation services to the site.
- The project proposes bike lanes on streets adjacent to the site and will provide bike racks and enhanced pedestrian facilities to make Baltimore more bicycle and pedestrian friendly.
- The project's PUD proposes language to allow for ZIP cars, or the like, to be parked on site to facilitate shared vehicle usage.
- The project expects to be one of the first projects approved under the new Baltimore City Green Buildings Standards. Also, the project has garnered attention for a 'stacked' large footprint retailer concept in keeping with Smart Growth principles.
- The project proposes the use of local small businesses during the construction and operations phases.
- Raise Baltimore's profile as a forward thinking, green City- As described above, the project proposes a 'stacked' building for two large-footprint retailers, a relatively new and under-utilized program that can work for constrained, urban in-fill sites.

To meet the Baltimore City Sustainability Plan Goals for an environmentally responsible project, the Commission on Sustainability has found that development plan addresses the following:

- Cleanliness Goal 3: Transform vacant lots from liabilities to assets that provide social and environmental benefits;
 - Strategy D: Return abandoned properties to productive use
- Pollution Prevention Goal 2: Improve Baltimore's air quality and eliminate Code Red days;
- Resource Conservation Goal 4: Maximize reuse and recycling of materials;

- Strategy D: Preserve, reuse, and recycle buildings and related materials
- Greening Goal 1: Double Baltimore’s Tree Canopy by 2037;
 - Strategy F: Identify and pursue opportunities for increasing trees planted on private property
 - Strategy G: Increase tree plantings in sidewalks, medians, and other public right of ways
- Green Economy Goal 2: Make Baltimore a center for Green Business
 - Strategy C: Encourage construction industry to use “green” building practices
- Green Economy Goal 4: Raise Baltimore’s profile as a forward thinking, green city
 - Strategy D: Support innovative and pilot projects and technologies

Signage: A complete signage package has been submitted and reviewed by UDARP and Staff. The package allows for a variety of signage to correspond to the multiple size retailers and future tenants. The package also provides a plan noting the location of and types of signs per location throughout the PUD development area. Signs along the western walls of buildings C1 and A1 and at the 24th Street entrance of A2 shall not be illuminated between the hours of 12am and 6am as they are the most adjacent to the existing residential buildings.

NOTIFICATIONS

The following groups were notified of these actions: Charles Village Civic Association, Charles Village Community Benefits District, Greater Homewood Corporation, Inc, Peabody Heights Resident Homeowners Alliance, Inc., Old Goucher Business Alliance, Remington Neighborhood Alliance, Station North Arts & Entertainment District, Old Goucher Community Association, Inc., Greater Remington Neighborhood Association, Historic Greater Fawcett Community Association, Medfield Community Association, Hampden Community Council, Central Baltimore Partnership, and relevant City agencies.

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